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# CHILDREN NOW

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JANUARY 2020

**INSIDE:**  
READ FUN-LOVING  
FAISAL'S INSPIRING STORY



**Save the  
Children**

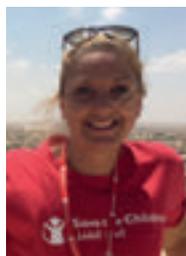
**CHANGE THE FUTURE**

# WELCOME TO THE WINTER 2019/20 EDITION OF *CHILDREN NOW*

At Save the Children, we want to enable children to tell you their real stories, in their own words. This issue is full of incredible tales of strength and resilience, with children describing their experiences and hopes for the future.

Every child is different. Each one of them has something special to bring to the world. Thanks to supporters like you, we lead the way on tackling big problems like pneumonia, hunger and protecting children in war. But we make sure each child's unique needs are cared for. You'll read about some of the different ways we do this in the pages to come.

I hope you enjoy reading about the amazing impact you're having. Together, we've achieved so much, and together, we'll achieve even more for children in 2020.



**Gemma Sherrington**  
Save the Children Team

\*Names changed to protect identity

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Being driven from his homeland has made Tomal\* determined to become an ace reporter

Photos: Front cover image: Jordi Matas / Save the Children, (4) Louis Leeson / Save The Children, (8) Fredrik Lerner / Save The Children, (10) Nina Raingold / Save The Children, (14) Rhiannon Adam / Save The



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Faisal\* manages to find fun in refugee-camp life, thanks to a loving family and our early learning centre

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Our efforts to assist families fleeing the ongoing economic and political crisis in Venezuela

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**Join in!** Trek through the desert with Arsenal football stars, learn about our legacy funding and inspire your local Scout Group

**Discover more about how you can empower children to transform their lives here:**

[savethechildren.org.uk/children-now](http://savethechildren.org.uk/children-now)



# CREATURE COMFORTS

How Save the Children and an unusual pet are helping one boy leave conflict far behind.

I look forward to  
the future and the  
future is here.

I am the future!

Peter,\* 14, South Sudan



“I love Am. When I came to Uganda, I opened a small shop, but my stock, clothes and almost all my money were stolen. I bought Am with what was left.”

Am is a small pigeon. But for Peter\*, a 14-year-old South Sudanese refugee, it represents warmth and stability following a childhood scarred by conflict.

Peter has built up a group of eight breeding pairs of pigeons since arriving in Uganda more than a year ago. Nurturing them provides a **strong focus in his life.** “I give them their feed, pour water for them and see them produce squabs,” he says. “I am the one who bought them and I am the one taking care of them.”

Peter used to live with his aunt and sister in South Sudan, but became separated from them while fleeing fighting between armed

groups and government forces, four years ago.

For a while he lived with small groups of refugees in the bush, before being taken in by an armed group. They fed him, but also forced him to train as one of their soldiers.

“We were taught how to hide, run and load and shoot guns,” he recalls.

Eventually, while the group came under sustained attack, Peter ran away from the militia to the Democratic Republic of Congo. There, he met fellow South Sudanese refugee, Thomas\*.

“He had nobody,” says the 21-year-old. “I agreed to look after him.”

They walked for more than a week to reach Uganda, and despite Peter’s initial setback, soon found a relatively safe, long-term home with Thomas’ mother Sadia\*,



who looks after seven other children in a small group of mud huts. Peter is often sombre and anxious. “He is still afraid [of the soldiers],” says Thomas. “When he faces difficulties, he thinks of his family and wants to go back to them.”

But Peter has received psychosocial counselling from our staff to help him start dealing with his traumatic experiences. **It’s given him the confidence to return to school.**

With our support and the care and love he shares with Thomas, Sadia and his pigeons, **he’s building a hopeful new life.**

“I feel good in the company of my friends,” he says. “We play football together and, if things get hard, they help you.”

Uganda hosts some 740,000 refugee children like Peter, the majority of whom

come from South Sudan.

We have reached more than 259,000 of them in 2019, including providing emergency healthcare, nutrition, counselling and safe foster homes for those who’ve become separated from their parents.

Thanks to your generosity, we can protect many more children, like Peter from conflict and give them the chance to become whoever they want to be.

“I would like to go to America and get a job,” he says. “I want to become the President of the Republic of South Sudan.”

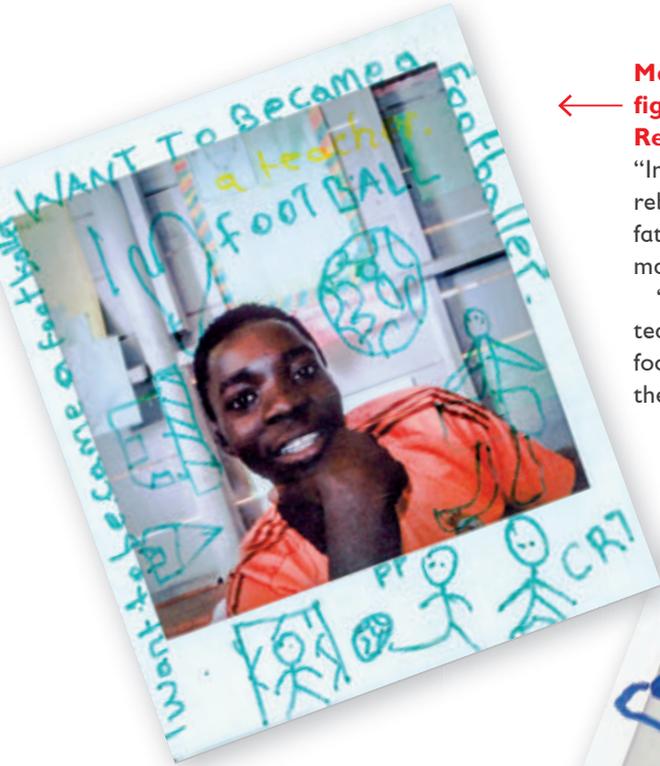
**To help us provide education and emotional aid to displaced children, visit: [savethechildren.org.uk/children-now](https://savethechildren.org.uk/children-now)**

\*Names changed and face obscured to protect identity



# PICTURES OF HOPE

We asked children in refugee camps across the world to illustrate polaroids of themselves. The results reveal their difficult pasts, but show their positive hopes for the future.



← **Mamadou\*, 14, Uganda. Fled fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 2016**  
 “In Congo, our harvest was taken by rebels, people were killed and my father was kidnapped, though he managed to escape.”  
 “I need to be educated so I can be a teacher. After that, because I learned football [in the camp], I can play when there are holidays.”

**Alizia\*, 13, Uganda. Left the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2018** →  
 “We left DRC in January 2018. The rebels used to beat my parents, and I lost my father. I wish we could settle in one place instead of having to move around, so that I can study. I want to become a doctor or a nurse.”

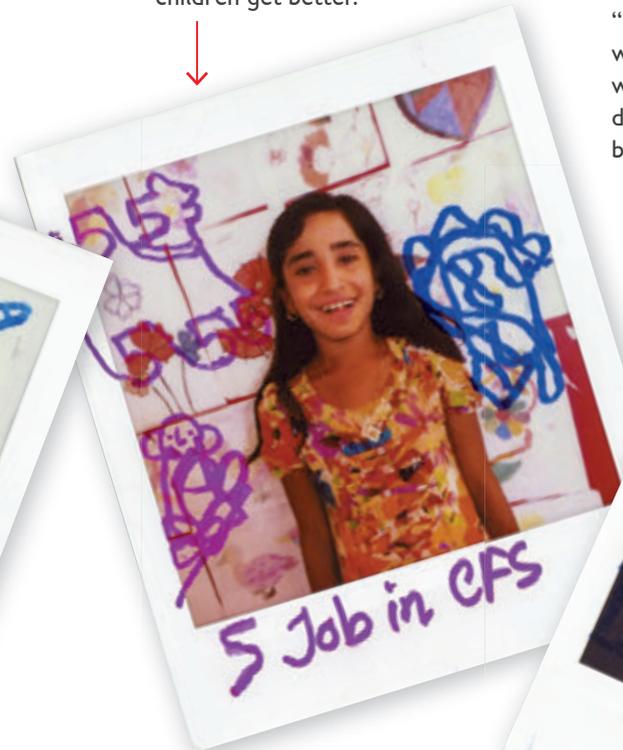


**Aleisha\*, 13, Rohingya refugee, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh**  
 “I like to play with my friends and draw at the child-friendly space [run by Save the Children]. I was very scared in the camps, but I’ve become educated and happier. I want to work here and help children get better.”

**Omar\*, 15, Syrian refugee, Jordan**  
 “We were very happy in Syria. We left because we were so close to all the death and our house was destroyed in an attack. I have drawn a doctor, as this is what I want to be. I want to build a hospital and call it Syria.”



→ **Marwa\*, 14. Left Syria for Jordan in 2012**  
 “I’ve loved painting since I was little and I want to be a painter, when I grow up. That’s why I have drawn a brush. I’ve also drawn a big house because I want one, some day. We had a big house in Aleppo, and many friends there.”



\*Names changed to protect identity  
 Photos: Fredrik Lerneryd / Save The Children



Abraham, aged 7 months with his foster aunt, Rebecca, aged 10

## BREATHING SPACE

**Pneumonia kills more children than measles, malaria and diarrhoea combined. But we can save children like Abraham for less than the price of an apple.**

Abraham is an affectionate, smiley baby. Sitting on his bed at Lodwar County hospital, Kenya. He plays happily with his mum Mercy.

He arrived at the Save the Children supported medical facility just a couple of weeks ago, suffering from pneumonia and struggling to breathe. But thanks to the staff, he has made a remarkable recovery.

Pneumonia kills almost 1 million children each year – 80% of them aged under two – and, for a while, Abraham appeared to be in grave danger.

“I noticed that his coughing was unusual and when he cried he made a very low sound,” says Mercy (pictured with Abraham overleaf). Her local health centre in Kakhol referred him to the hospital in Lodwar. But it was more than 30 miles away and it took Mercy a month to save up for the bus fare. Meanwhile, Abraham grew increasingly unwell.

“I was very worried,” she recalls. “I felt a lot of pain.”

When Abraham eventually arrived at Lodwar, doctors diagnosed him with pneumonia and malaria.

But because of fabulous supporters like you, Lodwar staff have been trained in the latest techniques for fighting the disease and have easy access to life-saving equipment. This means that, while the hospital sees huge amounts of children



gripped by pneumonia, most of them start to get better within days. Much to the relief of his family, Abraham was one of them.

“I always had positive thoughts,” says Mercy. “But I was never told that he would recover so quickly.”

“If the hospital was not here, it is only God who could have helped,” says Abraham’s foster grandmother Rhoda.

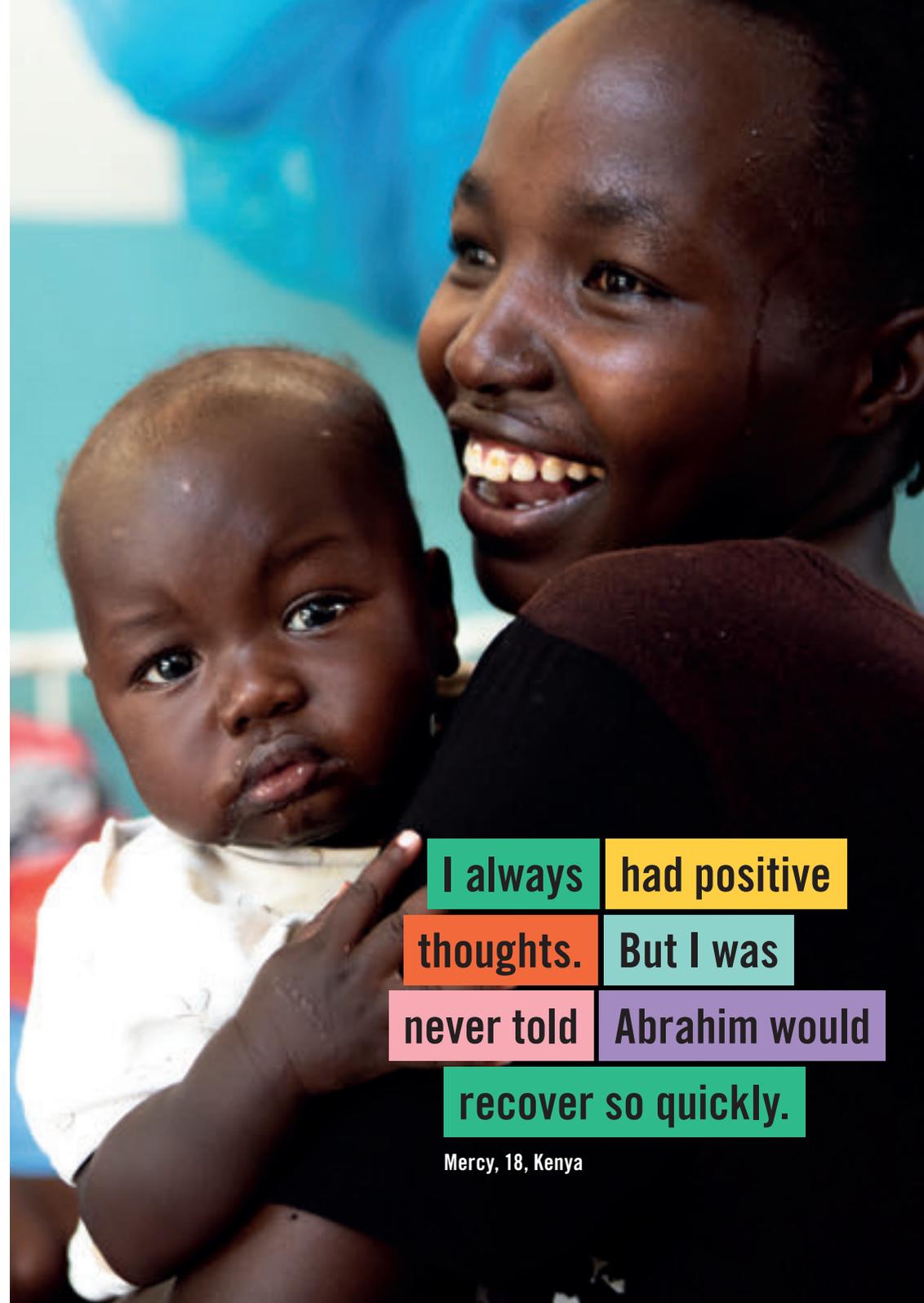
Our work in Lodwar is part of a commitment to end pneumonia in under-fives worldwide. We’re also helping the UN meet its target of preventing 5.3 million unnecessary child deaths by 2030.

The antibiotics needed to save a child with pneumonia cost as little as 30p. So your donations and our efforts make a big

difference. We’ve scaled up our operations to treat children around the world. We’re calling on governments in countries to prioritise building stronger healthcare systems. And we’re fighting for companies to lower the price of pneumonia vaccines, which could allow more than 76 million infants to be immunised.

.....  
**To help us provide antibiotics to save a child with pneumonia, visit:**  
[savethechildren.org.uk/children-now](https://savethechildren.org.uk/children-now)  
.....

Back from the brink: Abraham and his mum, Mercy (above/right)



I always had positive thoughts. But I was never told Abraham would recover so quickly.

Mercy, 18, Kenya

I like Captain America,  
the Hulk, Thor and  
reading books with my mum.

Daniel, 4, Manchester



## THE POWER OF CHAT

**Boosting children’s language development and building stronger bonds between them and their parents can be as simple as an online nudge.**

Flavianna adores her five-year old daughter Anna and son, Daniel, four. “Before children, we had more time but less love,” says the mother of two from Manchester. With her husband Andrea frequently away for work, she often has to care for them alone, and finding space to focus on their language development can be difficult. An innovative Save the Children tool called TwoCan is changing that.

Our TwoCan chatbot sends text, video and image tips direct to Flavianna’s smartphone, showing her how to make daily activities - from washing up to doing the shopping - opportunities to develop her children’s growing minds.

Inspired by TwoCan prompts, Flavianna may get Daniel thinking about language by saying, “I’m putting towels in the refrigerator” while tidying up and ask him if he spots a mistake. Or on a visit to the park, she’ll ask him and Anna how many birds, rocks or flowers they can see. “It’s easy,” she says.

Flavianna, originally from Brazil, adds,

“When we came to the UK, Andrea and I only spoke Portuguese. TwoCan has given me many extra English words to help the children.”

By the age of three, children in low income, often time-poor, families can already be 17 months behind in their communication skills. TwoCan gives parents simple nudges to assist their youngsters and shows them how important direct interaction is. “I thought children’s [language development] just happens,” says Flavianna. “But I need to help.”

TwoCan’s parent project, Wonder Words, has developed other innovations such as bath toys and changing mats with messages encouraging parents to talk to their babies, and 60 billboards placed around London that carried motivational messages celebrating parents’ role in improving their children’s language.

Wonder Words is still at the research stage, but parents who’ve tried the products report that they have prompted them to interact and play with their children much more.

With your help, we can dedicate energy and resources to finding new ways for children to reach their potential, no matter their background.



## **MAKING HER OWN ARRANGEMENTS**

**An inclusive, sensitive project is teaching Bangladeshi girls and families why they should avoid child marriage and find other ways to provide for themselves.**



I dream about my future. I want to support my parents.  
 Shumi, 15, Bangladesh

When Shumi’s family decided to arrange her marriage to a man she’d never met, they did so with the best intentions. The 15-year-old comes from a very poor part of Sylhet, north-east Bangladesh, where early marriage is often seen as the best way to secure a child’s future. Shumi, however, was appalled by the idea.

“I wanted to study,” she says. “I asked my neighbour, Jasmin, to make my parents understand.”

Nineteen-year-old Jasmin had recently been trained as a community peer leader through our Suchana project, which helps families across Sylhet deal with issues surrounding child marriage. She knew that getting married too young can prevent girls from having a job or any control over their lives. Babies born to adolescents are also

more likely to suffer from malnutrition – 46% of Sylhet children have stunted growth due to poor nutrition.

“We went to Shumi’s family and told them,” says Jasmin, **a smart, charismatic young woman.** “It’s important people know.”

Confronted by the facts, Shumi’s father, Atique, an agricultural worker was reluctantly persuaded. He explains that when he arranged the marriage he was “thinking of my family. Stopping it was an emotional decision. But I want my daughter to be happy in all respects and I will support her education.”

Shumi was delighted. “I want to become a great human being,” she says.

As well as helping girls like Shumi, Suchana staff and community volunteers

run information groups on healthy eating and hygiene, with a particular focus on toddlers and babies, many of whom have very young mothers. Our health workers treat children for malnutrition and we lobby governments to allocate more funding for nutrition programmes.

The project, which reached more than 136,000 families in 2018, also provides training on crop cultivation and fish farming. It even supplies people with ducks to rear, to help them make a living. Jasmin and her community grow crops in flood-proof “sack gardens”, following project staff’s guidance. “Before, we didn’t know how to protect crops in the rainy season,” she says.

“My family used to buy fish from the market, but now we breed and sell them,” Jasmin continues. “I want to establish our pond so we come out of poverty.”

Shumi, meanwhile, helps Atique tend to

his vegetable garden, grown from Suchana seeds, “to build a beautiful life”, as she puts it.

“I dream about my future,” she adds. “I want to work on issues like nutrition and child marriage and support my parents. I push my younger sister, Shuma, to study too.”

Thanks to your support, we’re helping girls all over the world become **educated, independent and resilient.**

We’re making sure they play central roles in creating successful, bright futures for their communities.

**We need your support to fund projects to help girls and young women around the world.**

[savethechildren.org.uk/children-now](https://savethechildren.org.uk/children-now)

Photos: Tom Merilion / Save The Children



# CRISIS UPDATE: VENEZUELA

**They've lost their homes and most of their money, so we're providing destitute families with vital aid.**

The economic and political crisis in Venezuela has plunged 90% of the population into poverty, creating an acute humanitarian crisis.

More than 4 million people have left the country since 2015, and this number is only expected to increase. More than 2 million of them now live in Colombia and Peru, many sleeping rough on the streets, at risk of disease and malnutrition. Many children, particularly those that traveled alone, are at risk of trafficking or recruitment into armed groups.

With your support, however, we're active in Colombia and Peru, including life-saving health services; cash grants so that families can buy food and other essential items; and temporary learning spaces so that children have a place they can learn, play and

recover from what they've been through. As well as sanitation facilities such as toilets and safe water so that people don't rely on unsafe water sources that can make them unwell and cause disease outbreaks.

"I used to have to push a cart all the way to a farm to collect water for my family," says Marcos, 12 (pictured below with his mum), currently sharing a one-room shack with his parents, grandmother and two siblings in Maicao, Colombia. Now Save the Children provides Marcos and his family with safe drinking water. "Now I use the same little cart to play instead."

With many pregnant women unable to see a doctor in Venezuela, our emergency health teams' services in Columbia, on the Venezuelan border, include counselling and prenatal care. Children often haven't been to school for years, but now our temporary learning centres are getting them back into education. We're supporting children at risk of abuse, too.

Our staff have reached more than 123,000 people, including 78,000 children, despite having to cope with limited resources and an insecure political environment in Colombia. But with the number of Venezuelans here alone expected to reach 2.4 million by the end of 2020, it is critical that we do more. We need the help of our supporters now more than ever to provide life-saving assistance to those in need.

Mother-of-five Noraima had been under a tree in Maicao, having had to leave four of her children back in Venezuela, until we gave her a cash grant to build a shelter and reunite the family. "Without Save the Children, I don't know where we would be," she says. "I will be eternally grateful."



Selenia and her son Marcos (above)

Photo: Jenn Gardella / Save the Children

## HOLD THE FRONT PAGE



**Why living in a refugee camp is no barrier to Tomal making his media dream a reality.**

Tomal\* is one of almost a million Rohingya who've fled violence back home in Myanmar, and are now living in Cox's Bazaar refugee camp in Bangladesh. The 14-year-old is determined to record his people's stories and make sure they're not forgotten. "If the international community aren't there for us, we'll die here," he says.

**"I want to be a journalist. The world needs to know about us."**

With the help of staff at one of our 75 child-friendly spaces (CFSs) in the area, he is learning how to compile reports and practising his interview skills on other children. "I read leftover papers from the roadside and things on people's walls," he adds. "[Articles] about Myanmar or children being kidnapped. I want to work out what is true and what is fake, and to learn from the writing style."

More than 80,000 refugee children at the camps have severe mental health issues, often as a result of witnessing family

members being murdered. We're giving thousands of them vital psychological support. And through his reports on the likes of 12-year-old Jannat\*, who arrived in Bangladesh two years ago, Tomal shows that such youngsters can overcome the trauma they've experienced.

"The sisters (facilitators) play and chat with us at the CFS," Jannat\* tells him in an interview. "Before, I didn't feel good. **Now, I am very happy.**"

The CFS also provides a safe place for Tomal and Jannat to play, eat and hang out with friends. "I've been taught life skills, how to have good manners and all about my rights at the CFS, too," Tomal says. "When I came to Bangladesh, I was so afraid. There were poisonous animals and we didn't have regular food rations. I'm not afraid anymore."

**Tomal and other Rohingya children want to hear from you. Send them your message of hope at:**

**[action.savethechildren.org.uk/tomal](https://action.savethechildren.org.uk/tomal)**

\*Names changed to protect identity

Photo: Allison Joyce / Save the Children



Faisal\* (third left), 5, attends a class at Save the Children's Early Learning Centre (ELC) in Za'atari camp for Syrian refugees, Jordan.

## READY FOR LIFT-OFF

**Little Faisal is a bundle of carefree energy. He's proof that, with your support, growing up can be a time of joy, whatever the surroundings.**

"I'm a ninja. At home, I play hide and seek and jump from the furniture as if I can fly", says Faisal\*, age 5.

Faisal is one of approximately 40,000 children at Za'atari refugee camp, Jordan, living in a pre-fab shelter with limited electricity. But the main concern of the talkative little boy seems to be his Japanese spy alter ego and taking to the skies.

The five-year-old, whose parents fled Syria shortly before he was born, attends one of our three early learning centres at the camp. It's helping him take his mind off

the hardship around him and concentrate on being **a fun-loving, fulfilled child.**

The facility develops his literacy, numeracy and emotional skills. It also gives him a safe space to talk to his friends, play with toys, build castles and try musical instruments.

"I draw and write and go on the slide," he says. "I paint! I paint everything! Especially bears."

"He's become very social, since being at the centre," says his mother Zahra\*. "He shares what he's learned with his siblings, too."

"I get angry quite easily," says older brother Bilal\*, 11, who can remember the bombing in Syria and the spacious home and shop his family once had. "Faisal is peaceful. He doesn't get angry unless someone crosses a red line, like hitting him."



**If I could have a pet,  
I'd choose a bird,  
a cat or a chicken.  
Three of each!**

Faisal,\* 5, Jordan



But Faisal is also very energetic and full of crazy, imaginative thoughts. “I tell a story about a rabbit to my baby sister, Suha\*,” he enthuses. “Once upon a time, there was a father rabbit and a mother rabbit, and they had babies. The end. Another story is about three baby turtles, and one of them wears make-up.”

Faisal is very close to Bilal, who takes him to the early learning centre each day on the back of the family bike.

“I have lots of toys from him, including a tiger and a new plane,” says Faisal.

“We play fight and I pretend I’m weak

so Faisal can win,” says Bilal. He also lets his young brother play with the teddy bear he brought from Syria – one of his most treasured possessions. **“I love Faisal and he loves me.”**

Because of supporters like you, each year, almost 2,500 children graduate from our early learning centres in camps in Jordan, more confident, better educated and ready for the world. We’re providing **opportunities** so that whatever happens next to a child like Faisal is up to them, not the circumstances they were born into.

Bilal makes sure his little brother Faisal doesn’t come to any harm around camp (above). Faisal is all smiles at our early learning centre (right and above right).



\*Names changed to protect identity  
Photos: Jordi Matas / Save the Children



# YOUNG INSPIRATION

**Children in the remote, mountainous Malungon area of the Philippines often miss out on schooling. But Jun Rey, 21, makes sure his class of 48 under-fives at a Save the Children co-funded early development facility get a great start to their education.**

### Why did you become a teacher?

I'm one of nine children and had to wake up at 4am to sell fish, so I could afford to go to school. That left a mark on me. I'm now doing a degree in education and am passionate about helping other children.

### What activities do you do in class?

Playing is an important way for the children to learn. They have toys and I make things like puppets out of corn husks and corn silk, recycling resources to save money.

We also sing and I teach them to read, using books written in the local dialect, provided by Save the Children's First Read project.

### How do you cope with 48 pupils?

Their parents wonder that! It can be difficult, but the children generally listen

to me. Some are moody, some cry, some are silent. You develop different teaching styles for each of them.

### Do you involve the parents in the children's learning?

I run regular sessions, advising them how to improve their child's literacy. Even though the children are just starting to learn, they really need support at home.

### What difference do you think the facility makes?

The children will find moving on to primary education much easier — they'll be quite advanced in understanding things like numbers and letters. They'll be more responsible, independent and have plenty of initiative, too.

### What does your job mean to you?

When a child understands something new, it's the best feeling. Being a teacher makes me happy.

Parents have said that I have fighting spirit, which is something I find really flattering. We don't have many resources here, but through my efforts the children still learn a lot. The training and support I've had from Save the Children has helped me enormously, too, and **I'm so thankful to supporters.**

Photo: Hanna Adcock / Save the Children

# JOIN IN!



VARIOUS DATES

## RUN THE GOOD RACE

Be your personal best and join a Team Save running challenge to help us build a better world. We have places at the Bath Half Marathon, Manchester Marathon, London Landmarks Half Marathon, Edinburgh Marathon Festival, the Royal Parks Half Marathon and many more! Contact [events@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:events@savethechildren.org.uk)

## BADGE OF HONOUR

We're so excited that the Scouts have chosen us as a partner for their A Million Hands programme. If you're a Scout leader, visit [scouts.org.uk/community](https://scouts.org.uk/community) for fun and interactive activities so your section can increase their own and others' awareness about the issues displaced children face and build connections with Scouts in conflict-affected areas. They can earn their Community Impact badge, too. Email [scouts@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:scouts@savethechildren.org.uk) for more information.



A MILLION HANDS



EVENTS NATIONWIDE

## THE GIFT THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

Learn about the great things you can achieve by remembering us in your will, at one of 24 events across the UK, this year. You'll hear from our Legacy Ambassadors, who've seen our overseas projects in action. You'll also discover more about our history and other programmes at home and abroad. For further information, email [giftsinwills@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:giftsinwills@savethechildren.org.uk)

## AN ARSENAL ADVENTURE

23–28 March 2020

Join Gunners legends Per Mertesacker and David Seaman on a once-in-a-lifetime four-day trek through the spectacular Jordan desert. You'll be raising funds for the Arsenal Foundation and its joint programme with Save the Children, Coaching for Life, which builds children's resilience through football. You'll also meet new people and push yourself out of your comfort zone. See [just-challenge.com/arsenal](https://just-challenge.com/arsenal)



MARCH 2020

Photos: Jamie Baker / Save the Children, Anna Stanford / Save the Children

Thanks to your support,  
children around the world  
have brighter futures.

If you would like to do  
more to assist our work,  
use the enclosed form to  
make a donation or call  
our supporter care team  
on 020 7012 6400



**Save the Children**  
CHANGE THE FUTURE

Photo: Tom Merilion / Save The Children

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